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ABSTRACT

The "new science" of leadership encourages and supports participative management and focuses on relationships. As they train educational leaders in democratic, humane, and inclusive principles, educators must model those same principles in their classrooms. Teachers seeking to evoke the voices of adult learners through transformative teaching must recognize the diverse voices of adult students, encourage their total participation in the classroom, and build relationships that give voice to their silence or reluctance. A descriptive, qualitative study based on open-ended interviews with 10 students from the past 3 years confirmed the effectiveness of the following transformational teaching practices: have students respond to class readings in reflective journals; ensure the active participation of all students by designing activities around classroom work in small groups; accept students and their own experiences by assigning true case stories appropriate to the class' focus and providing feedback on the stories that underscore the value of what they already know; and gradually help learners take charge of their own learning through learning activities designed to demonstrate the value of shared or distributed power and assessment activities in which students are partners in their own assessment. (Contains 19 references.) (MN)

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Why Haven't I Heard From You?
Evoking the Voices of Adult Learners Through Transformative Teaching

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Why Haven't I Heard From You?

Evoking the Voices of Adult Learners through Transformative Teaching

"To make change, to keep this country strong, to bring peace to the world, the voices of the masses must not remain silent. Decisions cannot continue to be made by the dominant culture for the good of the people. We believe that the only way to achieve a true, free, fair, democracy (and a democratic education) is to stop training the majority of people on this earth into silence, and a minority of the elite into power. Education should be learning to voice and not allowing yourself to be oppressed."

Students for Cultural and Linguistic Democracy (SCaLD), 1996

I have come to realize something. My students have helped me to arrive at this realization. Adult learners want to be heard and they want to hear from each other. It is vital to their learning process. It is essential to their future commitments. My students in school leadership tell me that too many times in their graduate classes, no provisions are made for their voices, their experience, or their knowledge to be heard or attended to. My students have helped me to learn this extraordinary lesson: adult students want to be heard! The primary purpose of this paper is to present practices that I use which evoke, develop, and/or make heard individual learner voices in my school leadership courses. A secondary purpose of the paper is to display the value of these practices for my students through statements elicited from the students by my co-researcher. A tertiary purpose is to suggest that such practices transform learners so that they take on a new role as partners with the teacher in the learning process, actively taking charge of their own learning.

The "new science" of leadership encourages and supports participative management and focuses on relationships (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon;

Sergiovanni, 1995; Short & Greer, 1997; Wheatley, 1994). As we train educational leaders in democratic, humane, and inclusive principles, do we model these principles through our practices in the university classroom?

How can those who teach school leadership classes address a democratic pedagogy? What kinds of practices might support pedagogy that includes in the teaching/learning act the diverse voices of students? Although there is a substantial body of knowledge centered on the teaching/training of pre-K/12 teachers, there seems to be little research which specifically addresses the teaching/training of leaders at any level. The research that does exist has not been strongly focused on recognizing the voices of school leadership students, the value of their participation in the classroom, or the importance of building relationships among students and between teacher and students.

Transformational Teaching

My own students have led me, coaxed me, pushed me toward becoming more inclusive and empowering in my teaching, more concerned with learners becoming the principal instruments of their own learning (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992; Kane & Khattri, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). In my classes I teach about transformational leadership, and, I am trying to become a transformational teacher. McCaleb (1994) defines a transformative classroom as a place where among other things, the teacher focuses on evoking the voice of every student; where students are encouraged to develop their own voices in interaction with the voices of others; where those who have been silent are urged to overcome their feelings of impotence and lethargy. The transformative classroom for adults pushes them toward challenging the teacher's assertions, toward speaking their own mind, toward questioning others' assumptions, toward "networking."

This paper emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diverse voices of adult students, encouraging their total participation in the classroom, and building relationships that give voice to their silence or reluctance.

Research Methods

The major data source for this paper is a qualitative study specifically designed to elicit my students' views on the importance of power and caring from two perspectives: how they as students had experienced these concepts in my classroom and how they as educators might use these concepts as a basis for their own pedagogical practices. The descriptive, qualitative study relied strictly on open-ended interviews using a series of very broad guiding questions. I compiled a list of my students from the immediate past three years and identified them by gender and ethnicity. From that list, ten students were randomly selected by the second author, who purposively made sure that at least four were female, four were male, and two were ethnic minorities if possible. I am never to know which students were selected and the students were assured anonymity. The second author interviewed the students using open-ended questions focused on issues of power and caring as these constructs interacted in my classroom. These interviews were audio-taped and the tapes were erased once the typed transcripts were finished. The transcripts then came to the co-authors to be analyzed.

To analyze the data, we read, reflected on, and re-read the transcripts over and over again. From this reflective, collaborative, and hermeneutical process, we made several inferences. It was during this analysis that the theme of "being heard" emerged as the subject of this paper. The resulting paper was read by several of the participating students and the second author practiced "reciprocity ... give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1991, p. 57) with these students. The reactions of the students to the first draft of the paper were then incorporated into ensuing drafts of the research paper.

The information obtained from these triangulated data sources has been intriguing. Many times over and in many different ways, the students talk about having a voice in the class - in the way it is structured, the manner in which it is conducted, having opportunities to speak out, to be listened to.

From Silence to Speech

It all seems so logical, so reasonable, and so appropriate that diverse adult learners should have a strong voice in the shaping of their learning and the interactions in the classroom -- not just in socratic dialogue, but in ways that draw on the learners' experiences and opinions. The transformative classroom would hear and recognize all voices, all experiences and build on them. And yet, I contend that instruction/assessment in higher education has not traditionally been carried out in a transformative manner. Rather, I believe and my students confirm, that just as in much of K-12 schooling, "*structured silences*" permeate all classroom relations (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985, p. 75). As a result of my belief and listening to my students' voices, I have attempted to move away from the professor-centered, lecture-oriented classroom to more student-centered, cooperative, reflective methods. Such methods recognize many voices, prefer multiple strategies, and use many and varied assessments. The teacher focuses on meeting the needs of all students (female, male, those of all cultural and experiential backgrounds) at exactly the place where they are. My beliefs in such methods and my faith in my students have helped to shape my pedagogical practices.

There is currently much being written about the need to develop K-12 classrooms which reinforce the right of those of varied opinion to have their viewpoints heard. Beane and Apple (1995) suggest that voices of those outside the dominant culture (people of color, females, the young) are silenced by school-sponsored and classroom-upheld knowledge but that educators in a democratic society have an obligation to help young students voice their own ideas. My sense is that , in the adult classroom, there are also those who are more or less silenced by professor-centered instruction and that these are often silent voices of those outside the dominant culture (people of color, females, some shy males). I hold it to be a strong obligation to bring out the ideas and voices of **all** my students.

In fact, I feel a need to create an environment where there is no felt threat if one

speaks out; where, additionally, there is a strong impetus to speak up. I agree with teacher/author Krista Sorenson that since all students have unique voices and experiences to bring to the classroom, it is important that the students get to know each other as human beings and that the ideas of everyone (students and teachers) be respected (Sorenson, 1996).

In this paper, I describe a few of my pedagogical practices which I consider to be transformational - practices which evoke students' voices and involve them constructively in their learning. I include some students reactions to my teaching.

A Safety Net for Expression - Reflective Journals

Students in each of my classes are asked to respond to the class readings in at least 100 words per week on reflective journal pages. They are invited to respond both analytically and emotionally by writing new insights gained from their reflections on the reading. Although some students do not like the "task" of writing reflectively, almost all of them appreciate the impact it has on their learning. Additionally, most of them value the personal dialogue which the journal sets up between me and them.

I respond to their writing as in a dialogue journal, supporting, cajoling, giving specific feedback to their comments and questions. When they appear to misunderstand the reading or to not quite grasp the learning (or to not accept it), then I ask questions designed to coax them to rethink the issue. I also use stories and sometimes my own insights or beliefs to expand their consciousness.

I never use the journal to "correct" their ideas or to make them feel threatened as a result of having expressed their thoughts. Instead, I consciously try to gently move them into another realm of thought, using persuasion more than using my power as the instructor.

I have often noticed that the journals provide a kind of safety net for timid or reserved students. They can try out their thoughts with me, with little risk involved. When they receive positive feedback on their insights or nonjudgmental examination of

their assumptions, they are then more confident sharing them in class.

Indeed, I often read aloud in class anonymous selections from individual journals when such writings would seem to be of great interest to the other learners. Students listen intently to these musings of their colleagues, and discussion is often provoked as a result. It is as if the student really has spoken aloud in the classroom, without having been identified. I even sense that some students write ever more intensely as the semester progresses -- perhaps in the hopes of having their thoughts read aloud to the class?

The ability of reflective journals to evoke learners' thoughts and voices is evidenced in the following statements made by some of my students about the journals.

Student Voices

"I like the fact that it [the journal] is a very personal way of interacting with the teacher and receiving immediate feedback. I think at times I may be thinking things or questioning things that I do not want to share with the entire class and journaling allows me to be a participant in my own learning without the apprehension of speaking to a whole group....Journaling allows the learner to tell the teacher what he or she believes is important." (Female, Euro American)

"This tool was the most eye opening of all the learning tools we used in class this semester....I was forced to dig into a side of my brain that I don't generally use, the right side. I was asked to not only speak of the new information that I obtained but also what my 'feelings' were about this new information. It actually felt good and was liberating to express myself in this new way. I'm still a 'just the facts' kind of person but now realize the necessity of letting my creative side have equal time." (Male Euro American)

"After the first couple journals I quickly began to enjoy getting ready to write them. The 'chore' of writing the journal became quite easy once I began to think of it as an opportunity to 'talk' to my teacher about the things I had just read. I'm not sure I wouldn't still think it was a 'chore' or have this opinion if it hadn't been

for the fact that my professor took the time to respond in a non critical way to my thoughts and opinion. I really appreciated the comments as well as the occasional supportive 'yes' or acknowledgment of something that hadn't been considered before." (Male Euro American)

Extending the Safety Net - Expression Through Collaborative Work

The classes I teach are evening courses in two and one-half hour blocks. Since students are often fatigued after a hard day of teaching, it is best to make sure that most of the learning activities ensure student active participation. Of course, such mental activity will strengthen their learning as well. I purposefully design activities around classroom work in pairs or other groupings of three to five in number in order to mentally engage students in their learning. Class evaluations and self-assessments consistently indicated that this cooperative sharing/networking is a valued part of the class.

Every student speaks and is heard in such small cooperative groups if I have designed the groups and the task appropriately, as well as carefully monitored and adjusted the activity and the interchanges. I rotate from group to group, listening without interruption unless I find one student dominating the group, or a student who is not talking at all.

The small group work then becomes another springboard for individual expression, that of speaking out in the large class group. In the small group work, questions of import are answered, individual brainstorming is converted to group agreement, parts of the reading are interpreted, case stories are discussed, problems are confronted, etc. The student who represents in large group the collective work of the smaller group can count on having a valued and respected voice -- because it represents the entire small group. Since even the most quiet or reluctant learners are named as "reporters", most of the students can thus have the experience speaking out in a large group with the confidence that the ideas, solutions, assertions made have already been deemed valuable and are, therefore, safe to share with others.

Sharing ideas, etc. in small groups also contributes to the development of students' voices by giving them a chance to share in a lower-risk environment before contributing their ideas in large group. Once concepts, insights, and questions are explored in the small group, the author of such insights gains considerable courage to share them with a greater number of people.

The following student voices discuss shared cooperative group work in terms of being heard and being at ease in a large group.

Student Voices

"I don't mind speaking to groups if I am in control of the group, but when it comes to sitting in groups in a class, in cooperative learning, I never liked participating in that. She took all that away somehow, and I actually enjoyed it. It didn't bother me opening up to strangers. Normally, I wouldn't have done that." (Male Euro American)

"One specific situation in which I felt she truly did equalize power, was when we were having group discussions, when there was a chance that some people could have been hurt by what others said. She set up ground rules, and made us feel like it was okay to participate, and that we all had an equal part. No one was more important or valuable than anyone else." (Male Euro American)

"She forced me to network with my colleagues and learn to trust their experience. I thank her for that!" (Female Euro American)

"I appreciated being able to ask questions to a small group instead of a large group. I guess it was less threatening and I also wouldn't be taking up a lot of other peoples' time." (Male Euro American)

Attaching the Safety Net - Accepting Students and Their Own Experiences

In every educational administration class I teach, learners write a true case story

appropriate to the focus of the class. These case stories are submitted to me on the second night of class so that I can photocopy them for immediate and/or future use in the class, to make a point or to practice a certain concept. For example, in the class Supervision of Teachers, students are asked to select a teacher with whom they are acquainted, preferably one with whom they have worked. The supervision student is to maintain confidentiality, but otherwise write a short story about this teacher and his or her teaching. Each student is then to analyze in writing this teacher's needs and teaching behavior, and explain how, as a supervisor, she or he would meet those needs and promote the teacher's growth. The first draft is submitted to me and I ask questions or give positive and specific feedback as appropriate. At a later date, after we have specifically studied developmental supervision, the students share their case stories with one other person and each helps the other (using their budding conferencing skills) by providing further insights on the case. At a still later date, when they have even more knowledge of supervision, they submit their second draft of the case story to me.

There are other ways I try to recognize who the students are and underscore the value of what they already know. In the class on school systems management, we use a group process to select the most important topics to study in the class, giving learners a chance to pass up topics they already know about and to focus in on topics they have a strong desire to learn about or are worried about (however, I take an active part in this process and add in topics of my own which I believe are essential to their development as critical thinkers and ethical principals). In Analysis of Research, students choose their own action research projects, which are usually based on their lives and experiences, and, as a result, meet their own personal/professional needs in some way.

The following statements will underscore the importance to the learner of being accepted and valued in the university graduate classroom.

Students' Voices

"She doesn't really try to change your opinions. You don't have to think a certain

way, so it's more 'power to', but still she tries to help you expand on it also." (Male Euro American)

"I think that when teachers have a lot of power over students, the students don't have a lot of input as to what they want to study, and how they want the class to be structured. I think that teachers can be very structured and stringent, and they have the ability to stifle a lot of learning, and it can lead to a lot of negative attitudes towards school, and feel that their needs aren't being met, and that learning is not fun." (Female Euro American)

"[She] was willing to devote time to students individually and outside of class. This fosters learning by making students feel important." (Female Euro American)

"The instructor accepted different views in a nonjudgmental way which allowed for easy class participation." (Female Euro American

Gradually Removing the Safety Net - Transforming

My primary and overriding goal in all of the classes I teach is to guide and encourage learners to develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and learning. There is often resistance to this concept, which the learners explain by pointing out that most of their university classes have been traditionally taught and that they are simply not accustomed to the "ways" which I use to help them learn. It is very difficult for them to deal with an instructor who attempts to give up some of her power and seeks to foster autonomy, choice, control, and responsibility in the learners.

In all of my classes we learn about power, both "power over"/authoritarian power and "power to"/shared power. Many of the learning activities are designed to point out the value of shared or distributed power. The classes all encourage critical leadership that examines the sources and effects of power. I also emphasize in my classes the value of encouraging leaders, both students and teachers, to emerge in a school or school district.

There are several ways in which I attempt to lessen my "professor" power and encourage autonomy, choice, control and responsibility in my students. One way I support these characteristics is by honoring students' professional opinions and suggestions about the class content, methods, etc. in classes I teach. I previously mentioned that we use a group process to make choices about topics which will be learned in the school systems management class. Also, in each class, I invite students to be members of a student feedback team that is designed to solicit from fellow students reactions and suggestions about the design of the class, the methods used to learn, my characteristics as a teacher, and any other factors that the learners believe should be brought to my attention. After securing this information, the student feedback team then meets with me to discuss the "feedback" and brainstorm reactions/actions that might be appropriate. Additionally, during the last class period of each course, I ask students to take the time to "redesign" the course. They meet in small "redesign" groups to respond to a survey which asks them to examine materials, topics, methods, etc. and to complete one survey per group. I then use information from these groups to redesign the course for the next time it is taught. It is my belief that inviting learners to participate as professional teachers/learners in such a way empowers them to share with me the leadership role in the class, thus involving them in major classroom decisions -- transforming them.

Secondly, I believe my classroom is transformative because I encourage students to think on their own, to discover their own insights as a result of reflection, to develop their own knowledge in the manner in which it best suits their needs at the time. Although I focus on major goals and have developed learner outcomes to reach those goals, the students are expected to synthesize knowledge and experience in order to construct their own way of reaching those goals. It is as if I have pointed out to them on a map the location we are aiming for and have indicated some possible ways to get there, but the learners must select the means, the time frame, the necessary materials to obtain,

who they want to accompany them, etc. This constructivist notion is somewhat challenging for many of my students and they struggle not to say the forbidden phrase: "I don't know what you want." The reason the phrase is forbidden, of course, is because it is not what "I" want, but what will help them learn the most that is important.

One learning activity that I use in order to help them develop learner autonomy and choice is the construction of a "platform" or belief statement in each of the courses. In supervision class it is called "a model of supervision". In school systems management, it is called "a management platform." In school leadership theory, it is called "the ideal school." Each platform is to be designed with such quality that it could be included in a professional dossier to be used for interview purposes when the student is seeking a job. Each platform is to clearly display for potential employers who the learner is as a prospective administrator. Each platform is to expertly "sell" the prospect to those who are hiring.

Students have indicated that writing these belief statements is exceptionally challenging. One student even told me after the fact that she had almost "hated" me for assigning it because she just couldn't do it. Many learners indicated that they had never before been asked to reflect on their belief system in such a way. Many resented the fact that I would not suggest a format, nor a number or words, nor give them models to look at. However, most of the students, after having successfully developed the platform and after having gone through several drafts with my suggested edits, were extraordinarily proud of their efforts (including the female student who had "hated" me) and had learned, I hope, a valuable lesson about empowerment.

A third way in which I attempt to transform students from powerless to autonomous is in the area of assessment. I have many methods of assessing student understanding throughout the course, the reflective journal being one of the key methods for this. However, in the transformative classroom, the student would also participate as a partner in his or her assessment. Therefore, at the end of each course, students fill out a

reflective self-assessment on their learning or non-learning in the class. They also write reflective paragraphs designed to show their learning to themselves as well as to the instructor. These paragraphs are focused on each of the major learning activities in the course. It is my belief that these reflective self-assessments help the students to internalize at a deeper level exactly what they were able to pull out of the course and that such assessments also help them to focus on future development.

The following student voices demonstrate a perception that my classrooms are, indeed, somewhat transformative.

Student Voices

"She always tried to create an environment in which the students almost to a certain degree led the class, and determined the direction in which the class went. I don't think there was anything so set in stone, that she didn't allow us flexibility. That encouraged us to participate." (Male Euro American)

"In P. Kay's class, you do have power. You have the power to educate. P. Kay shows you that you do have the power to teach, and in that power, you do have the power to give them great things." (Female African American)

"I know that I was really wanting to get information, and she gave us the opportunity to write down what we wanted to learn about....The issue of allowing the adult learner to help set up the class, and taking care to really talk through issues and concerns that arise throughout class discussion, and providing them feedback, and flexibility." (Female Euro American)

"[W]riting my model of supervision ..., I had difficulty putting my 'voice' on paper. I tried to think of it as the key to opening the door to the interview and how I would react to this type of paper in the application. My hope is that anyone reading my model would 'hear' my desire to support teachers and help them do the best job possible for our students." (Female Euro American)

Why do I spend so much time and direct so much energy toward evoking the voices of my adult students? Why am I willing to give up some of my power in the classroom? Why do I think it is a worthy focus for my writing? Because I am teaching people who will one day be school leaders. They will be leaders of schools where teachers should have voices and be leaders and where students should have voices and be leaders. Because I believe, along with Short and Greer (1997), that the process of empowerment of school participants results in "enhanced learning opportunities for students" (p. 130), and that preK-12 "teachers who are empowered will in turn give students more opportunities to become empowered through shared decision making, and increased choice and responsibility for their own learning" (p. 157). Such empowerment is defined as a means for persons to acquire control over their lives by means of decision making about important aspects of their work and their personal competence (Short & Greer, 1997).

Short and Greer (1997) go on to explain that "[t]raditionally, students are passive participants in their learning activities, growing increasingly detached from any substantive involvement in school experiences [and that]...schools provide little opportunity for students to develop skills in group interaction and problem solving, responsibility for their own learning, flexibility in thinking, and life-long learning values" (p. 159). In short, schools do not usually support the development of student "voice" or the creation of transformative classrooms and constructivist learning, even though it has been suggested that such empowerment would allow students to display their competencies, learn new competencies, and strengthen their functioning both in school and in life (Caine & Caine, 1997; Dunst, 1991; Giroux, 1994; Harmin, 1994; Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Slack, 1995). If we wish to prepare school leaders who will promote such learning, then we must model it in our leadership preparation programs.

It is therefore, equally disheartening, to be aware that preparation programs for

leaders do not support the development of adult student voice, according to Murphy (1992). He cites sources which proclaim that the prevailing method of instruction in training institutions is still lecture and discussion centered on the use of a textbook even though university students regard unfavorably such a practice. Giroux (1994), citing Fine (1991), goes even further, stating that "schools as part of the wider dominant culture often function to marginalize, disconfirm, and delegitimate the experiences, histories, and categories that students use in mediating their lives...[and that] texts, classroom relations, teacher talk, and other aspects of the formal and hidden curricula of schooling often function actively to silence students" (p. 41). Giroux urges that in order to address this situation in our K-12 schools, what must be developed and carried out through leadership programs is "a theory of educational leadership as part of a wider preparation for the revitalization of democratic public life" (p. 31) -- a critical moral discourse. He goes on to state that the role of educational leaders needs to be redefined as that of "transformative intellectuals". It is evident to me that such critical and transformative leaders cannot be developed in university classes where learner ideas, criticisms, and voices have themselves been silenced by the authority of the teacher, by traditional instructional methods, and by the assumption of a fixed knowledge base which does not draw on the experiences and thoughts of the learners.

Current efforts to promote a redesigning of preparation programs for school leaders include an emphasis on the learners. Murphy (1992) includes the following voice-evoking principles for instruction in such programs:

1. Learning should be student-centered (as opposed to professor-centered).
2. Active learning should be stressed (as opposed to passive consumption).
3. Personalized learning should be emphasized (as opposed to collective consumption)
4. A balance of instructional approaches is needed (as opposed to dominant reliance on the lecture-discussion model).

5. Cooperative approaches to learning and teaching should be underscored (as opposed to individualistic competitive strategies). (154-155).

Murphy goes on to state that central to all changes that might be made in preparation programs in order for school leaders to be well prepared is that students need to be more seriously engaged in their learning. It is my belief that, with the consistent help of my students, the practices employed in my classrooms are promoting (and succeeding in) such learner engagement. In fact, the data collected from my students supports what Whitaker (1997) proclaims to be motivational needs likely to be present in almost any group as the need to be:

- supported
- heard
- noticed
- encouraged
- trusted
- appreciated and valued
- informed
- helped to clarify ideas
- helped to develop skills and abilities
- challenged and extended (p. 18)

If we, as teachers, want our students to be seriously engaged in their learning, then we must be strongly cognizant of their motivational needs and be reminded that many of these needs can be supported by a transformational classroom where the learners' voices are evoked, developed, and heard.

What does it mean to be a teacher? Of course teaching is about learning. But, the question we have to continually ask ourselves is how that learning best takes place. If I listen to my students, they tell me that one of the most important factors in their learning is that they be heard, that they be an equal in the class. If I am a caring teacher who

believes in distributing power, I will elicit their voices and assure that they are heard.

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[1]The first author, P. Kay Duncan, wrote the paper with a focus on her teaching in educational administration classes. The second author, Climetine Clayburn, conducted the interviews, assisted in interpreting the data and identifying the emerging themes, and edited or rewrote where necessary.